Nova Scotia
Advisory Council on
The Status of Women

Conseil consultatif sur la
condition féminine de la
Nouvelle-Écosse

An agency of the Province of Nova Scotia

The Journey Continues ...

Printed on papers that contain recycled fibre

NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Business Plan 2007-2008

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2007-04791/

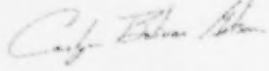
Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Message from Minister

I am pleased to share the Advisory Council on the Status of Women's business plan for 2007-2008. Council's mission is to advance equality, fairness and dignity for all women in the province.

This plan builds on the success and accomplishments of past years, especially with such initiatives as the campaign school for women and the Healthy Balance Research Program. These projects are at the heart of women's equality - bringing more women in to decision-making through politics and supporting the health and well-being of unpaid caregivers in this province, a group that grows as our population ages. Work to include women of all backgrounds in trades, technology and science occupations continues to be a focus for the Council. A new initiative to help the family and friends of women in abusive relationships breaks new ground.

As Council heads into its 30th year, we have much progress to be proud of, and much left to do. I am pleased to work with the Council on further achievement for all women in Nova Scotia.

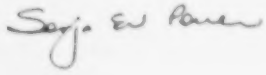


Carolyn Bolivar-Getson
Minister responsible for the administration
of the *Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act*

Message from Chair

I am pleased to present the final business plan of my term as Chair of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women. I've enjoyed my term and have confidence that Council will continue to do important work in the future.

This plan will further our mission of advancing equality, fairness and dignity for all women in the coming year, and help shape government policies and programs that touch the lives of women throughout Nova Scotia.



Sonja Power
Chair

1.0 Mission

To advance equality, fairness and dignity for all women in Nova Scotia.

Vision

A province where all women enjoy full equality

- where women of diverse cultures, races, religions and sexual orientation participate in decisions that affect their lives, families and communities ... where women sit in equal numbers on municipal councils and in the legislature
- where legislation, policies and programs of government(s) reflect that equality
- where women's earning power equals that of men ... where women are welcomed in all professions and trades ... where household work and child care is valued by all and shared equally by women and men
- where women do not have to fear violence in their homes, workplaces or communities
- where women's health and well-being is a priority for women, health care services and government

Mandate

The mandate of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women derives from the statute establishing the Council. Section 4(1) requires the Council to advise the Minister and to bring forward the concerns of women in Nova Scotia. Section 4(2) defines the powers of the Council, which may:

- receive and hear petitions and suggestions concerning the status of women
- undertake and recommend research on matters relevant to the status of women
- recommend and participate in programs concerning the status of women
- propose legislation, policies and practices to promote equality of opportunity and status
- publish reports, studies and recommendations

2.0 Links to the Corporate Path

Council's strategic goals are directly aligned with the government's Corporate Path - Direction and Priorities. Council's work is guided by the goals of inclusion, economic equality, personal safety and freedom from violence, and health and well-being.

(1) Creating Winning Conditions - Achieving economic equality for women continues to be a driving force for Council. Council initiatives linked to our goal of inclusion will enhance and expand employment opportunities for women in Nova Scotia. Advancing the inclusion of women in trades and technology is a long-term goal of Council and one which supports a globally competitive business climate. With respect to globally competitive connections, Council has earned recognition on the international front by providing expertise on gender and health issues in Germany and will be acting as the government partner for a policy and program initiative related to women's education soon to be underway in China

(2) Seizing New Economic Opportunities - Effective partnerships with government and community-based organizations have enabled Council to play an active role in increasing opportunities for women's economic well-being. Council works with industry sector councils as well as labour and women's organizations to increase the recruitment and retention of women in trades and technology occupations. Council provides program advice, direction and implementation assistance to Women Unlimited, Techsploration and the Women's Economic Equality Society in order to increase and improve the economic opportunities available to women.

(3) Building for Individuals, Families and Communities - Involvement with the province's HIV/AIDS strategy, and the Healthy Balance Research Program are just two examples of Council's commitment to initiatives that will enhance the health of many Nova Scotians. Council continues to initiate and lead projects and research activities in an effort to ensure safe and vibrant communities for all. Council has successfully partnered with governments, academic institutions, community organizations and committees province-wide, to develop research proposals and participate in community-based initiatives aimed at educating and promoting the need for safer homes, streets and communities for all. Council is currently leading a provincial initiative to enhance the personal safety and well-being of aboriginal women in Nova Scotia. Council's efforts to enhance democracy and increase the political participation of women are essential to building and ensuring vibrant communities for all Nova Scotians.

3.0 Planning Context

The Advisory Council on the Status of Women remains, as it always has been, an organization that spans boundaries, that builds bridges, between communities, all orders of government, and academic institutions. Those bridges are built for all women, with an ongoing commitment to inclusion and cultural diversity.

Women in Nova Scotia have made much progress, but also continue to face many challenges:

- Women occupy only 9 of 52 seats (17.3%) in the provincial legislature and about 21 percent of municipal council seats, overall, and only 7.3% of mayors and wardens in Nova Scotia municipalities. Women's representation on agencies, boards and commissions continues to be significantly lower than their male counterparts.

- Race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability and other grounds of discrimination intersect with gender to multiply disadvantage. For example, Aboriginal women are three times more likely to have experienced spousal violence than non-aboriginal women and they are also more likely to experience the most severe and potentially life-threatening forms of violence compared to non-aboriginal women (54% versus 37%).

- Nova Scotia has the highest proportion of persons living with a disability among all the provinces with 1 in 5 women and men over the age of 15 reporting some type of disability or chronic health condition in 2001. As the overall disability rate increases substantially with age, and, as the majority of seniors (especially older seniors) are women, older women are disproportionally affected by disability.

- Women with disabilities are significantly less likely to be in the paid labour force. Less than half (47.6%) of women with disabilities who are in their prime working years are in the paid labour force compared to more than 80% of women without disabilities of the same age. Despite the fact that immigrant women, especially those who have immigrated recently, are more likely to have a university education than non-immigrant women in Nova Scotia, they continue to experience a much higher unemployment rate than non-immigrant women. The unemployment rates of women of African descent are slightly higher than those of non-racially visible women.

- Women in Nova Scotia continue to face economic inequality. The gap between male and female earnings continues to be significant, regardless of whether women are employed or self-employed. In 2004, women who worked full time in Nova Scotia earned 69.4 percent of what their male counterparts earned. For a variety of reasons, women continue to remain at risk of poverty. Sole-support mothers are in a particularly difficult financial position, with about half living below the low income cut-offs. At the end of the life cycle, too many Nova Scotian women find themselves in financial hardship

because they were not in a position to accumulate pensionable earnings or savings during their lifetime.

- The participation of women and girls in non-traditional careers continues to be alarmingly low. In Nova Scotia, only 4.6% of people working in the trades are women. Just under 10% of students enrolled in trades and technology programs at the Nova Scotia Community Colleges are women. Currently (January 2007) only 4% of active registered apprentices in the province are women (139 of 3,917).

- Violence against girls and women in all its forms is highly prevalent in the province. Women in Nova Scotia are about 40 times more likely to be killed by a spouse or intimate partner than they are to be killed by a stranger. The high incidence of sexual assault in Nova Scotia, combined with low reporting and a discouraging response to sexual offences, leaves women in a position of increased vulnerability.

- As the number of older seniors increases, women face a heightened demand for unpaid assistance and caregiving. Women are predominately the caregivers to seniors at 61% compared to 39% of men. Moreover, adult daughters assume the greater amount of caregiving responsibility towards parents. Research indicates that this development entails increased stress for women who are in paid work, particularly when they also have children to care for. The emerging situation will increase pressure not only on women and their families, but also on employers and government.

- Recently announced program cuts by the federal government, particularly cuts to Status of Women Canada will have a direct impact on the work of the Advisory Council. The closure of the Nova Scotia - Status of Women Canada office and the elimination of the research program will undoubtedly increase work demands placed on Council. Women's organizations in Nova Scotia who have actively been lobbying on issues such as poverty, precarious employment, family violence, sexual assault and access to quality child care will no longer be eligible for federal grants. Expectations may be placed upon Council to fill the research and policy voids resulting from federal programs cuts.

A brief summary of Council activities in relation to each of the above issues and goal areas follows, to lay the groundwork for this year's business plan.

Activities to promote participation and inclusion of women were:

- Immigrant Women's Roundtable Report was released in July 2006
- Communicated research results on women's participation in municipal decision-making and supported information-sharing and networking between elected women through Women in Local Government Project

- Input and follow-up to a Federal-Provincial-Territorial Policy Forum on Aboriginal Women and Violence
- Participation on the Public Service Commission's Diversity Roundtable
- Input into the Minister's Advisory Committee for the Children and Family Services Act and the Adoption Act
- Brief on the Employability of Women with Disabilities: Breaching the Disability Wall
- Round Tables to examine issues and barriers experienced by women with disabilities

Examples of work to promote women's economic equality included:

- Formation of two working committees to follow up on key issues arising from the 2005 Women, Work and Care forum.
- Techsploration, a program designed to introduce Grade 9 girls to trades and technology occupations
- Women Unlimited, to pilot programs for women in trades and technology
- Revised edition of Money Matters - A report on the economic situation of women in Nova Scotia
- Women, Work and care: Policy at the Crossroads Forum Report and Highlights Report

Our anti-violence agenda included:

- Initiating and leading a Nova Scotia Working Group to address issues related to family violence in aboriginal communities
- Participation in the Silent Witness Program, to raise community awareness about women abuse and intimate partner homicides
- Raised awareness of sexual violence against women and of need for services beyond metro that support survivors
- Participation in three inter-agencies against family violence across the province
- Expansion of *Making Change: A Handbook for Women in Abusive Relationships* to include a chapter to assist family and friends in dealing with disclosure of family violence
- National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women memorial event
- Continued distribution of *Making Changes: A Handbook for Women in Abusive Relationships*

Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Promoting health and well-being among women and their families was addressed as follows:

- Gender-based analysis of HIV/AIDS strategies in Nova Scotia continued
- A major research program on paid work and unpaid caregiving resulted in a number of publications and a provincial forum held in May 2006
- Well Women's Clinics in rural communities
- National and international relationships further inform the Council's strategies for positive health and well-being of women - extended expertise on gender and health issues to German medical university

Two major challenges continue to confront the Advisory Council on the Status of Women:

- to maintain a coherent approach to the multiplicity of issues referred to us by government and community; and
- to improve our visibility in all parts of Nova Scotia

Advisory Council publications and information resources are a valued contribution to both government and community users. Council's publication, Guide for Girls, won an award for best print publication in Atlantic Canada. Work continued throughout the year on developing a new and improved website which will be officially launched in March 2007. Our website allows us to reach out and link to many policy and community audiences. Media coverage of council events and views was positive throughout the year. Council members and staff reached community and policy audiences through public presentations in all parts of the province.

Council will continue to maintain and build capacity with our many partners. The keystone is our people–dedicated Council members, high-performance staff and trusted partners in community and government. These relationships make it possible to advance equality, fairness and dignity for all women.

4.0 Strategic Goals

The members of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women have defined the following strategic goals for the work of the agency:

Inclusion and Participation

- To increase the participation of women in all their diversity in decisions that affect their lives, families, and communities, with particular emphasis on those who face discrimination because of race, age, language, class, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or various forms of family status.

The goal of inclusion addresses government priorities in areas of cultural diversity and the social inclusion of all Nova Scotians. It is the policy of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women that this goal will be an overarching one for all the Council's work. No projects or initiatives will be undertaken without a consideration of the ways in which social inclusion and cultural diversity are addressed. Over the coming year, Council will continue to work extensively on issues faced by women with disabilities and family violence in aboriginal communities.

Economic Equality

- To promote women's economic equality.

Women's participation in the full range of education, training and occupational opportunities is an integral part of building a learning culture, greater prosperity, and supporting families and Nova Scotians in need within a context of fiscal responsibility and accountability. Council will follow up on the recommendations arising from the Women, Work and Care: Policy at the Crossroads forum and continue its efforts to increase employment opportunities for women in science, trade and technical-related occupations.

Personal Safety and Freedom from Violence

- To reduce violence against women and girls in communities, workplaces and families.

The reduction of violence in all its forms continues to be a major challenge for Council. Council has taken the lead in establishing a provincial working group to address the impact of policy and the effects of family violence on aboriginal women as well as the impact to aboriginal communities. Staff work collaboratively with community organizations and committees on educational activities related to violence against women. Council has also developed a partnership with community organizations working in the area of sexual assault to conduct a province wide needs assessment on sexual assault programs and services.

Health and Well-Being

- To improve the health and well-being of women and their families.

Council continues to partner with the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health in the Canadian Institutes for Health Research-funded Healthy Balance Research Program. The Healthy Balance Research Program continues to generate new research on women's paid and unpaid caregiving in Nova Scotia and its health impact on women. Opportunities for effective policy and program interventions to assist caregivers will be identified and communicated to relevant target audiences. A unique component of the Healthy Balance Program are the four Equity Reference Groups (African-Nova Scotian women, Mi'kmaq women, immigrant women and women with disabilities) whose members contributed significantly to all phases of the research process and will continue to have an active role with the dissemination of research outcomes to both policy and community audiences.

5.0 Core Business Areas

1. Policy and Research

Advises Minister on concerns and priorities of women, and formulates strategies and options to address these. Conducts quantitative and qualitative research in consultation with academic and community groups and government departments to ensure advice is a feasible, relevant, timely and accurate guide to governmental action.

2. Information and Education

Collects and disseminates information on women's issues to Minister, Council, staff, and other key stakeholders including media and the general public. Through a comprehensive communications strategy, informs and influences key stakeholders about issues and concerns affecting women, and about Council and government priorities, activities, accomplishments and opportunities for improvement in addressing women's issues.

3. Community Liaison and Rural Outreach

Through the Council members and the Community Liaison and Rural Outreach Program, brings forward concerns of women from across Nova Scotia, with particular attention to disadvantaged groups. Partners with communities and agencies to advance equality for women in programs and services.

6.0 Inclusion Priority with Performance Measures

- To advise government and other stakeholders on best practices, policies and strategies for the inclusion of women in all their diversity in the development of legislation, policy and programs.
- To increase the numbers and diversity of women in public and political life.
- To maintain the effectiveness of the Advisory Council by increasing the visibility of Council and its members.
- To increase the visibility and enhance the economic and social well-being of women with disabilities in Nova Scotia by educating government, policy makers and the public about their issues.

Strategic Goal: Inclusion					
OUTCOME	**MEASURE**	**DATA**	**TARGET 2007/2008**	**ULTIMATE TARGET**	**STRATEGIC ACTIONS**
The work of the Advisory Council addresses diversity and social inclusion	Proportion of Council's briefs, statistical publications, informational reports, etc., that address diversity and social inclusion	Year 01-02: 100% Year 02-03: 89% Year 03-04: 100% Year 04-05: 86% Year 05-06: 90%	90%	100%	Consistently review Council products as they are developed for diversity/social inclusion content. Ensure that new council initiatives address issues of diversity and social/economic inclusion
Increased public awareness of Council initiatives	Tracking of Council website visits	Year 01-02: 49,244 Year 02-03: 68,260 Year 03-04: 89,855 Year 04-05: 118,900 Year 05-06: 117,566	100,000	125,000 by 2010/2011	The Advisory Council's web-site is currently undergoing a major transformation with launch of new website scheduled for March of 2007. We will continue to maintain and enhance Council website, responding to identified information needs.
	Tracking number of speaking engagements of both Council members and staff, as well as audience size and location	Year 05-06: 16	20	25 by 2010/2011	A speaking engagement tracking form has been developed for Council members and staff to use. Support is provided to Council members and staff in relation to communication skills and speaking engagements. Mapping of Council's speaking engagements will be used to ensure a province-wide awareness is achieved.

Strategic Goal: Inclusion (continued)					
OUTCOME	**MEASURE**	**DATA**	**TARGET 2007/2008**	**ULTIMATE TARGET**	**STRATEGIC ACTIONS**
Increased public awareness of Council initiatives (continued)	Tracking of media stories related to the work of the Advisory Council	Year 01-02: 45 Year 02-03: 46 Year 03-04: 33 Year 04-05: 58 Year 05-06: 89 (print media only)	50 (one per week on average)	50 (one per week on average)	Ensure public's awareness of Council events, accomplishments and positions through effective communications planning and actions.

Strategic Goal: Inclusion (continued)					
OUTCOME	**MEASURE**	**DATA**	**TARGET 2007/2008**	**ULTIMATE TARGET**	**STRATEGIC ACTIONS**
Increased number of Newsbytes subscribers	Track number of Newsbytes subscribers	January 05: 363 subscribers March 06: 513 January 07: 1,115* * Note that this number includes e-mail addresses that may be invalid. Invalid addresses are purged annually by the gov't e-list software manager. While it is not possible to give exact numbers of invalid addresses, likely 60-100 addresses per year are purged.	1200	1,200	Newsbytes is the Advisory Council's bi-weekly electronic news bulletin which has been in existence since April 2002. Newsbytes replaced the Council's hard-copy newsletter and informs subscribers of Council news, updates, and short features on women's issues. Through website redesign and concerted efforts at marketing, the Advisory Council increases its Newsbytes subscribers to over 1,000 as of Jan/07.

Strategic Goal: Inclusion (continued)					
OUTCOME	**MEASURE**	**DATA**	**TARGET 2007/2008**	**ULTIMATE TARGET**	**STRATEGIC ACTIONS**
Sustained effectiveness of Advisory Council	Council member quarterly self-ratings (1 to 10)	Year 01-02: 8.2 Year 02-03: 7.9 Year 03-04: 7.3 Year 04-05: 7.8 Year 05-06: 7.9	8.0+	8.0	Conduct two-day orientation for new Council members, including media training and public speaking. Provide on-going support to Council members as required.
Increased numbers of Nova Scotian women obtain the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in public and political life	Number of Women's Campaign School graduates or political skill-building workshop participants	2004-05: 30 (25 from NS, 5 from out of province) 2005-06: 28 2006-07: Three political skill-building workshops with 20 women participating in each.	Campaign School for Women will be held in May of 2007 with 30 participants expected to graduate.	45 graduates every four-year cycle	In 2004, the Advisory Council on the Status of Women developed and coordinated the first-ever Nova Scotia Campaign School for Women. The School, held in Halifax in November 2004, had a total of 30 graduates who gained invaluable knowledge and skills required to participate actively in public and political life. In 2006-07, the Advisory Council will offer a series of workshops to women in three different regions of the province. The workshops will aim to enhance specific campaigning skills. The next Campaign School for women is scheduled for May of 2007.

6.1 Economic Equality Priority with Performance Measures

- To increase women's exposure to and participation in occupations where they remain under-represented, particularly in science, trades and technology.

- To develop an evidence-base for policy recommendations related to dependant care, precarious employment and early childhood learning and care with the goal of enhancing women's ability to support themselves and their families.

Strategic Goal: Economic Equality					
OUTCOME	**MEASURE**	**DATA**	**TARGET 2007/2008**	**ULTIMATE TARGET**	**STRATEGIC ACTIONS**
The advice, recommendations, and input that the Advisory Council makes in relation to gender, inclusion and diversity are valued and well utilized by government and community partners in social and economic initiatives., eg. Women in Trades and Technology Initiative, Women Unlimited, Hypatia, Immigration Strategy, Social Policy, Community Development Initiative.	Government departments and community groups express satisfaction with Advisory Council's recommendations and inputs. By employing a 5-point scale, ranging from poor(1) to excellent(5), departments, agencies and organizations will provide a rating of their level of satisfaction with the quality of the advice and input of the Advisory Council.	2005-06: 5.0	3.5 out of 5	4.0 out of 5 by 2010/2011	Enhance Advisory Council's capacity to conduct gender and diversity main-streaming through on-going research and training. Advise on gender and diversity main-streaming activities in and outside government in order to promote a diversity-inclusive gender perspective throughout the work of government. Partner with Dalhousie University's School of Public Administration to develop improved methods for gender and diversity main-streaming in government policy.

6.2 Personal Safety and Freedom from Violence Priority with Performance Measures

- To promote the need for a comprehensive strategy to deal with violence against women that takes into account the particular needs of diverse women.

- To make evidence-based recommendations to government and policy-makers about the need for development and expansion of province-wide sexual assault programs and services.

- To work with First Nation communities, governments, and the Mi'kmaq-Nova Scotia-Canada Tripartite Forum to identify program and service gaps and to research culturally appropriate models of prevention and intervention to assist women, families and communities in dealing with and responding to family violence.

Strategic Goal: Personal Safety and Freedom from Violence for Women					
OUTCOME	**MEASURE**	**DATA**	**TARGET 2007/2008**	**ULTIMATE TARGET**	**STRATEGIC ACTIONS**
Strong utilization of policy-based research and informational resources developed and disseminated by the Advisory Council pertaining to personal safety and violence against women	Track utilization of *Making Changes* and other relevant resources	2001-02: 13,300 2002-03: 11,430 2003-04: 40,337 2004-05: 38,434 2005-06: 21,672 copies of *Making Changes* were either requested (hard copy) or downloaded from Council's website.	25,000+* * this is a new target based on data from past several years.	25,000 per year on average	Update and reprint *Making Changes* as required. In the 2007-08 fiscal year, the Advisory Council will be releasing an updated edition of *Making Changes* which includes a chapter designed to provide guidance and advice to family and friends of women who are in abusive relationships.

6.4 Health and Well-Being Priority with Performance Measures

- To make evidence-based recommendations to provincial and federal governments, and to professional and community audiences about the support needs of women in care-giving and care-receiving roles.

Strategic Goal: Health and Well-Being of Women

OUTCOME	MEASURE	DATA	TARGET 2007/2008	ULTIMATE TARGET	STRATEGIC ACTIONS

The advice, recommendations, and input that the Advisory Council makes in relation to gender, inclusion and diversity are valued and well utilized by government and community partners in social and economic initiatives., eg. Women in Trades and Technology Initiative, Women Unlimited, Hypatia, Immigration Strategy, Social Policy, Community Development Initiative.	Government departments and community groups express satisfaction with Advisory Council's recommendations and inputs. By employing a 5-point scale, ranging from poor(1) to excellent(5), departments, agencies and organizations will provide a rating of their level of satisfaction with the quality of the advice and input of the Advisory Council.	2005-06: 5.0	3.5 out of 5	4.0 out of 5 by 2010/2011	Enhance Advisory Council's capacity to conduct gender and diversity main-streaming through on-going research and training. Advise on gender and diversity main-streaming activities in and outside government in order to promote a diversity-inclusive gender perspective throughout the work of government. Partner with Dalhousie University's School of Public Administration to develop improved methods for gender and diversity main-streaming in government policy.

7.0 Human Resource Strategy

Council continues to take proactive steps to ensure that new employees and newly-appointed Council members are representative of diverse communities. When appropriate, Council does targeted recruitment for Council members to ensure diversity of membership. Council consults with the Public Service Commission's diversity pool when filling casual, temporary and permanent positions. Given staff size (8 FTEs), orientation is done on an individual basis, taking into account the informational and developmental needs of each staff member. Orientation of new Council members is conducted on an as-needed basis. Council's human resource strategy is in alignment with the Government's Corporate Human Resources Plan.

8.0 Budget Context

	2006-2007 Estimate ($ thousands)	2006-2007 Forecast ($ thousands)	2007-2008 Estimate ($ thousands)
Gross Expenses	878	944	926
Net Expenses	868	868	916
Salaries and Employee Benefits	526	602	579
Funded Staff (FTEs)	8	7.9	8

9.0 Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology and Communications

Finance, Human Resources and Information Technology functions are carried out on behalf of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women by the Department of Justice CSU. This enables the Advisory Council to function with minimal expenditure for administrative overhead.

A communications advisor will continue to be assigned to the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, enabling effective communications support to the Minister, Council Chair, members and staff, and systematic communications planning and implementation for all Council initiatives.